

1 Samuel 25 - Thursday, August 7th, 2014

(1) Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

- Samuel's death here in verse one marks a turning point in Israel's history, such that it brings to an end the period known as the "Judges."
- I find it rather interesting how that Israel lamented for him at his death, because he was certainly not appreciated by Israel during his life.
- I mention that because we're all prone to speak well of someone after they're gone even though we would never say it when they were alive.

Proverbs 10:7 NKJV The memory of the righteous *is* blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot.

It reminds me of the humorous story that's told of two evil brothers. They were rich, and used their money to keep their evil ways from the public eye. They even attended the same church, and appeared to be perfect Christians. Then, their pastor retired, and a new one was hired. Not only could the new pastor see right through the brothers' deception, but he also spoke well and true, and the church membership grew in numbers. A fund-raising campaign was started to build a new assembly. All of a sudden, one of the brothers died. The remaining brother sought out the new pastor the day before the funeral and handed him a check for the amount needed to finish paying for the new building. "I have only one condition," he said. "At the funeral, you must say my brother was a saint." The pastor gave his word, and deposited the check. The next day, at the funeral, the pastor did not hold back. "He was an evil man," he said. "He cheated on his wife and abused his family." After going on like this, he finally concluded, "But, compared to his brother, he was a SAINT."

- Be that as it may, to me, Samuel was one of the godliest men who ever lived, and as such, we can learn many lessons from his godly life.
- Chief amongst them being it's possible to live a godly life in spite of those close in proximity to you living ungodly lives as Eli's two sons did.
- Another lesson we can learn from Samuel's life is even godly leaders err by looking at the outward appearance, as God looks at the heart.

(2) Now *there was* a man in Maon whose business *was* in Carmel, and the man *was* very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. (3) The name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And *she was* a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man *was* harsh and evil in *his* doings. He *was* of the house of Caleb.

- We have a number of problems here in these two verses the first of which is that we have a beautiful and godly woman married to a fool.
- Apparently, he's a rich fool, and the reason we know he's a rich fool is because the name is the nature, and the name Nabal, means "fool."
- Another problem we have is we're told he's a harsh and evil man in all his business affairs while she's a wise and understanding woman.

- If you're anything like me, you're probably asking yourself several questions like how does a harsh foolish guy get a beautiful wise woman?
- I'm of the belief that Abigail, whose name means "joy of the father," was put in the unenviable position of this being an arranged marriage.
- Sadly, there are many Nabal and Abigail marriages today that aren't arranged, but rather, the Abigail will marry them of their own volition.

F.B. Meyer - "It is remarkable how many Abigails get married to Nabals. God-fearing women, tender and gentle in the sensibilities, high-minded and noble in their ideals, become tied in an indissoluble union with men for whom they can have no true affinity, even if they have not an unconquerable repugnance."

- Another question that you might be asking yourself is, why would his parents be so cruel as to knowingly name him Nabal, meaning fool.
- It's been suggested that "fool" became his nickname for what would be deemed obvious reasons given that he was clearly a foolish man.
- Yet another question that comes up is why would a beautiful and godly woman be forced to stay married to such a harsh and foolish man?

Allan Redpath offers some valuable and direct insight into this unfair and unjust predicament, writing, "May I say to you lovingly, but firmly, if such a circumstance has befallen you, that is no reason for you to invoke the law of the country to get out of the entanglement. Perhaps God knew that you needed the fiery trial to humble you and make you a testimony to your partner. The Bible says you must stay as you are. Maybe there will come to you one day, as there came to Abigail, a new opportunity; but until then, it is for you to prove the grace and power of the Lord in your heart to strengthen you and keep you pure."

(4) When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, (5) David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. (6) And thus you shall say to him who lives *in prosperity*: 'Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!' (7) Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. (8) Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let *my* young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.' " (9) So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

- Allow me to explain what's happening here so we can have a better understanding of why this will go down the way it does, as we will see.
- First, the time of shearing the sheep would be akin to the farmer's time of harvest, and it was a time of feasting and celebrating the increase.
- Second for David's men to approach Nabal and make this request at the time of shearing would have been seen as completely acceptable.

- This because, David's men had protected Nabal's flocks from the Philistine's, who would often raid them and steal their sheep from them.

- As such, they would have been rightfully entitled to compensation, not by way of a mafia style tactic, rather, because of a cultural tradition.

- Namely, that of the traditions of generosity on the part of the wealthy owner to compensate everyone who had a part in their large increase.

Henry Morris - "David's men had protected Nabal's possessions against the very real threat of thieves in the large wilderness where they were, so it was reasonable of them to expect some kind of appreciation, especially on a feast day."

- It's important to note David doesn't take the posture of demanding this compensation from Nabal, but instead has it brought to his attention.
- The reason I point this out is because David is giving Nabal every reason to compensate them, and, no reason not to compensate them.
- By that I mean David isn't using tactics of intimidation or manipulation in asking for his due. In fact, Nabal should be the one to offer this.

(10) Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who *is* David, and who *is* the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. (11) Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* to men when I do not know where they *are* from?" (12) So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words.

- Three thoughts here before we see how David will react to this, the first of which is that Nabal is lying through his teeth in verse eleven.
- For him to say he did not know where they are from, contradicts what he says in verse ten, "who is David, and who is the son of Jesse?"
- In other words, how does he know David is the son of Jesse? David's men didn't present this request to Nabal by saying it was David.

- Furthermore, if he doesn't know who David is, then how does he know about what happened between David and Saul, then, blame David.
- By the way, who in all Israel hasn't heard about this David, who slew Goliath and delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Philistines?
- One has to wonder what David's men were thinking as they listen to Nabal's rant. Make no mistake about it; they know he's a lying fool.

- Secondly, notice that Nabal says either "I" or "my" a total of seven times, if my math is right, and he says it in just one verse, verse eleven.
- The reason I point that out is because it speaks to Nabal being as selfish as he is foolish, which is usually what happens with foolish men.
- I suppose you could say that to be selfish is to be foolish, and to be foolish is to be selfish in the sense that they both feed off of each other.

- The third thought is what David's men do when they hear this insulting response from Nabal. Actually, it's more about what they do not do.
- More specifically, they do and say nothing. They simply turn on their heels and head back to David so they can tell him what Nabal said.
- I would suggest that sometimes, doing and saying absolutely nothing and walking away from the Nabal's in our lives is the best response.

Proverbs 26:4-5 NIV Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. (5) Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

- While I am keenly aware these Proverbs seem to contradict each other, upon further examination one can see they compliment each other.
- Here's how I get there, verse five doesn't say not to answer a fool, it just says not to answer a fool in such a way that you stoop to his level.
- In other words, if the fool is insulting, as we see with Nabal, don't stoop to his level and be insulting to him or you'll be just as foolish as him.

- This is why often times the best thing to do or say is nothing at all because no matter what you say you'd have to stoop to his level to say it.
- However, this requires the discernment of the wisdom in verse 5, which says to answer a fool according to his follow or he'll think he's wise.
- In other words, answer the fool in your wisdom both in discerning if the circumstances warrant it, and in discerning it will expose their folly.

I like how one commentator said it, "Sometimes a fool, or wicked man, is not to be answered at all; as the ministers of Hezekiah answered not a word to Rabshakeh; nor Jeremiah the prophet to Hananiah; nor Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees; and when an answer is returned, it should not be in his foolish way and manner, rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing, in the same virulent, lying, ... and reproachful language; lest thou also be like unto him; lest thou also, who art a man of understanding and sense, and hast passed for one among men, come under the same imputation, and be reckoned a fool like him. [Conversely] Answer a fool according to his folly, ...but speak with a fool in thy wisdom,' ...which would at once remove the seeming contradiction in these words to the former, ... when a fool is answered, as it is sometimes necessary he should, ...it [should] be done in wisdom, and so as to expose his folly; he is to be answered and not answered according to different times, places, and circumstances, and manner of answering; he is to be answered when there is any hope of doing him good, or of doing good to others; or of preventing ill impressions being made upon others by what he has said; when the glory of God, the good of the church, and the cause of truth, require it; and when he would otherwise glory and triumph, as if his words or works were unanswerable, ... lest he be wise in his own conceit; which fools are apt to be, and the rather when no answer is given them; imagining it arises from the strength of their arguments, and their nervous way of reasoning, when it is rather from a neglect and contempt of them.

(13) Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is David's reaction towards Nabal is the opposite as it was towards Saul.
- Moreover, Nabal is not attempting to murder David, but Saul is. This begs the question of why it is David would react so differently here.
- I'm of the belief that it had to do with Saul's position as the Lord's anointed king, as opposed to Nabal who does not hold such a position.

- The reason I believe this is because often times we, like David, will treat our superiors differently than someone we perceive to be inferior.
- Herein lies a lesson we would do well to learn from what David does here, or perhaps better said, what David should not have done here.
- Namely, David reacting towards him in the way he did under the banner of Nabal being seen as his equal at best, or beneath him at worst.

One commentator said it this way, "David didn't show Nabal the same kindness and longsuffering that he showed to Saul. In just the previous chapter, David spared Saul's life when Saul not only insulted David but also actually attacked him and tried to kill him. David was able to be kind and longsuffering to Saul, but it seems to have been harder to do it towards someone he perceived as his equal or lower than himself. Often, this is true measure of our character - not how we treat our superiors, but how we treat our equals or those "beneath" us in some way or another."

- Here's where I'm going with all of this, sometimes instead of the Saul's and even the Goliath's getting to us, it's the Nabal's who get to us.
- Let me explain, David has just tasted from the sweet cup of victory with respect to what he did with Saul in sparing his life when in the cave.
- It's in those times, on the heels of a victory that we can become the most vulnerable to a defeat because we're prone to let our guard down.

1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV (12) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

- One of the lessons I'm learning in my own personal walk with Jesus Christ is that I'm prone to fall in the areas of my greatest strengths.
- The reason being is, I think I stand firm in that particular area, and as such, I develop a false sense of assurance and confidence in myself.
- What comes packaged with the self-confidence is the component of pride and as the Proverbs are replete with, pride comes before the fall.
- Peter is the poster child for failing and falling in his area of greatest strength vis-à-vis the aforementioned component of self-confidence.

Luke 22:31-32 NIV "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. (32) But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

- Notice Jesus prays that Peter's faith won't fail instead of his courage won't fail. I point this out because courage was his greatest strength.
- It's for this reason that the same Peter that had the courage to take on the entire Roman army didn't have the courage to stand up to a girl.
- The point being is that Peter's greatest fall and failure came in the very area of Peter's greatest area of strength namely that of his courage.

Louis Neely, of Warehouse Christian Ministries, said it this way: "In our greatest areas of strengths come our greatest perils."

- Thankfully Peter denying the Lord three times didn't have the final word in his life such that Jesus would end up restoring him three times.

John 21:15-17 NIV When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." (16) Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." (17) The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

- (14) Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. (15) But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. (16) They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. (17) Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him."
- This response on the part of this servant, whom were told witnessed Nabal's foolish lies to David's men, should not come as any surprise.
- This for two reasons, the first of which is that he is wise enough in and of himself to realize that he needs to warn Abigail of what Nabal did.
- Notice he even wisely tells her why he's warning her about Nabal instead of going directly to Nabal saying no one can talk to the scoundrel.

- The second reason this response on the part of this servant shouldn't come as any surprise is because he realizes that this was the David.
- More specifically, the David that killed ten's of thousands not to mention one very famous uncircumcised Philistine by the name of Goliath.
- Point being is he, in his wisdom, realized what David's son Solomon would write in the Proverb's yet future as it relates to a fool in his folly.

Proverbs 17:12 NIV Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.

- (18) Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. (19) And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. (20) So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them. (21) Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. (22) May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light."

- Clearly, David is totally reacting in the flesh as he seeks to mete out revenge by taking matters into his own hands in order to kill everyone.
- Notice that conspicuously absent from the narrative is any mention of David seeking the Lord concerning Nabal insulting and rejecting him.
- What happened to the David who sought the Lord in prayer before setting out to battle and even waiting for confirmation before setting out?
- I can't get over the striking contrasts between good and evil that's woven into the fabric of the account related to David, Nabal and Abigail.

One commentator notes this contrast best when he writes, "At face value this is ... about good and evil – about good and evil people, and good and evil actions. Abigail is good, Nabal evil. Nabal does an evil action; David, a good person is about to do an evil action in return but is stopped in time by Abigail's good actions.

- Notice also that David says, "he has repaid me evil for good," in verse 21 this because of what it says in Proverbs 17:13, which is after 12.

Proverbs 17:12 NIV Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.

Proverbs 17:13 NIV If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house.

(23) Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.
(24) So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, *on me let* this iniquity *be!* And please let your maid servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maid servant. (25) Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name *is*, so *is* he: Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him! But I, your maid servant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. (26) Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives and *as* your soul lives, since the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. (27) And now this present which your maid servant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. (28) Please forgive the trespass of your maid servant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. (29) Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, *as from* the pocket of a sling. (30) And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, (31) that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maid servant."

- This is one of the most fascinating accounts in all of the pages of Holy Writ. I say that because of how powerful Abigail is in stopping David.

- She gets him to slow down and step back to see the big picture, which is that he will be the next king of Israel, and this is unworthy of him.

- She also tells him to let the Lord defend him. If He defended him against Goliath and Saul who sought to kill him, He will do so with Nabal.

- She doesn't stop there, she also reminds him every so gently and graciously, that if he does this, he will regret this for the rest of his life.

- To me, this is textbook when it comes to patiently persuading someone to reconsider a decision they make and course of action they take.

- What makes her gentle answer so remarkable is David could make end her marriage problems by killing her scoundrel fool of a husband.

Proverbs 25:15 NIV Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.

Proverbs 15:1-2 NIV A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (2) The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

(32) Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed *is* the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! (33) And blessed *is* your advice and blessed *are* you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. (34) For indeed, *as* the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!" (35) So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

- I'm not sure if it's possible to adequately grasp how profound this is. I say that because she's just brought him back to his senses.

- So much so, David admits he's wrong and shows a woman who has just corrected him in front of four hundred of his men, such respect.

- I can't help but think that his men were endeared to him even more by him doing this. It's a good leader who will admit they were wrong.

(36) Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. (37) So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *like* a stone. (38) Then it happened, *after* about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

- And so it ends for this rich fool who was so arrogant and antagonistic when it came to everything he owned being his. Well, not any more!

- We don't know if he had a heart attack or a stroke, we do know while Abigail could save him from David's wrath but not God's judgment.

- It's been suggested that the Parable of the Rich Fool that Jesus taught in Luke 12:15-21, may have been directed at the likes of a Nabal.

Luke 12:15-21 NIV Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. (17) He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' (18) "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." (20) "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' (21) "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

(39) So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. (40) When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife." (41) Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maid servant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." (42) So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. (43) David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives. (44) But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who *was* from Gallim.

- We end the chapter with David taking Abigail as his wife after Saul gave Michal to another man, which means this was a second marriage.

- Also, David takes other wives, which brings up the issue of whether or not this was sinful. Some believe it was others believe it was not.

- Regardless of if it was or not, one thing is for sure, David's married life with more than one wife was never blessed throughout his entire life.